

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-23 (cancelled)

Claim 24 (currently amended) A matting agent for thermally curable systems, characterized in that said systems comprise at least one carboxyl-containing polymer as binder and at least one epoxy-group-containing compound as cross-linking agent, wherein said matting agent comprises ~~at least the following constituents:~~

- (a) a metal salt or a metal complex of an organic compound, the metal being selected from the group consisting of magnesium, calcium, strontium, barium, zinc, aluminium, tin and antimony; and
- (b) a polymerisation product of monomers, wherein the monomers including include epoxy-group-containing monomers and the epoxy value of the polymerisation product ~~being at least 0.1~~ is from 1 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram; and wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 0.2 to 120.

Claim 25 (cancelled)

Claim 26 (currently amended) A The matting agent of claim 24, for thermally curable systems, characterized in that said systems comprise at least one carboxy-containing polymer as binder and at least one epoxy-group-containing compound as cross-linking agent, wherein said matting agent comprises:

- (a) a metal salt or a metal complex of an organic compound, the metal being selected from the group consisting of magnesium, calcium, strontium, barium, zinc, aluminium, tin and antimony; and

(b) a polymerisation product of monomers, wherein the monomers include epoxy-group-containing monomers and wherein the epoxy value of constituent (b) the polymerization product is at least 1.5 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram[[,]]; and wherein the overall the ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is at least 3.0.

Claim 27 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 26, wherein the epoxy value of constituent (b) is from 1.5 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram, and overall the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is at least 3.5.

Claim 28 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim ~~24 or 25~~, wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 0.4 to 30.

Claim 29 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim ~~24 or 26 or 27~~, wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is ~~from 3.5 to has an upper limit of 30~~.

Claim 30 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim ~~26 or 27~~, wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 4 to 20.

Claim 31 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim ~~24 or 26~~, wherein the metal of constituent (a) is selected from the group consisting of magnesium, calcium, aluminium and zinc.

Claim 32 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 31, wherein the metal of constituent (a) is zinc.

Claim 33 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim ~~24 or 26~~, wherein constituent (a) is a metal salt or a metal complex of a carboxylic acid.

Claim 34 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 33, wherein the carboxylic acid is a mono- or di-carboxylic acid.

Claim 35 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, wherein constituent (a) is a metal salt or a metal complex of a dimeric or oligomeric unsaturated fatty acid.

Claim 36 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 31, wherein the metal salt or complex is selected from the group consisting of aluminium or magnesium stearate, aluminium or zinc acetylacetone, zinc methacrylate, zinc arachidate, zinc pentachlorothiophenolate [[or]] and zinc 2-benzothiazole thiolate.

Claim 37 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 36, wherein the metal salt or metal complex is zinc 2-benzothiazole thiolate.

Claim 38 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, wherein constituent (b) is selected from the group consisting of glycidyl (meth)acrylate homopolymers and glycidyl (meth)acrylate copolymers, where appropriate having different molecular weights and based on different comonomers, or a mixture of such compounds.

Claim 39 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, wherein constituent (b) includes one or more polymers containing glycidyl ester groups and, optionally, glycidyl ether groups, and having an average molecular weight (Mn = ~~number average from GPC measurement using polystyrene calibration~~) of from 1,000 to 30,000.

Claim 40 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, wherein constituent (b) includes one or more polyglycidyl (meth)acrylate polymers or copolymers having an average molecular weight (Mn) in the range from 1,000 to 30,000.

Claim 41 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 40, wherein the average molecular weight (Mn) is in the range from 2,000 to 15,000.

Claim 42 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, wherein constituent (b) has a glass transition temperature ( $T_g$ ; ~~determined by DSC at a heating rate of 5°C/minute~~) in the range from 20°C to 120°C.

Claim 43 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 42, wherein the glass transition temperature is in the range from 40°C to 100°C.

Claim 44 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, which further comprises constituent (c), a natural or synthetic wax, or wax-like substance having a melting point of at least 50°C.

Claim 45 (cancelled)

Claim 46 (cancelled)

Claim 47 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, characterized in that said matting agent is in particle form, and has ~~having~~ an average particle size in the range from 0.015  $\mu\text{m}$  to 1000  $\mu\text{m}$ .

Claim 48 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 47, wherein the average particle size is from 5  $\mu\text{m}$  to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ .

Claim 49 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein said matting agent is in the form of a solid mixture, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt or a zinc complex of an organic compound; constituent (b) has from 0.1 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram; and wherein the matting agent optionally comprises a polyolefin wax or a polyethylene wax having a melting point in the range from 50°C to 120°C.

Claim 50 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt of mercaptobenzothiazole.

Claim 51 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein constituent (b) is a glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer.

Claim 52 (previously presented) The matting agent of claim 51, wherein the glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer has a molecular weight (Mn) in the range of 2,000 to 15,000.

Claim 53 (cancelled)

Claim 54 (cancelled)

Claim 55 (currently amended) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt of mercaptobenzothiazole; constituent (b) is a glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer having a molecular weight (Mn) in the range from 2,000 to 15,000; ~~optionally and further comprising a polyethylene wax having a melting point in the range from 50°C to 120°C (measured by DSC at a heating rate of 5°C/minute); and wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of constituent (b) to metal equivalents of constituent (a) is from 0.4 to 30.~~

Claim 56 (currently amended) The matting agent of any one of claims 49-52 and 55, wherein constituent (b) has from 1.5 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram; and wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of constituent (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 3.5 to 30.

Claims 57-79 (cancelled)

Claim 80 (new) The matting agent of claim 44, wherein constituent (c) is present in an amount of from 5% to 30% by weight, based on the total weight of constituents (a), (b) and (c).

Claim 81 (new) The matting agent of claim 80, wherein constituent (c) is present in an amount of from 10% to 30% by weight, based on the total weight of constituents (a), (b) and (c).

Claim 82 (new) The matting agent of claim 24 or 26, characterized by the absence of any wax, or wax-like substance having a melting point of at least 50°C.

Claim 83 (new) A thermally curable system comprising:

- (a) a binder comprising at least one carboxyl-containing polymer;
- (b) a cross-linking agent comprising at least one epoxy-group-containing compound; and
- (c) a matting agent according to claim 24.

Claim 84 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83, wherein the carboxyl-containing polymer is a carboxyl-terminated polyester and/or a carboxyl-containing (meth)acrylate polymer.

Claim 85 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83, wherein the matting agent is present in an amount of up to 20% by weight based on the total weight of binder and cross-linking agent in the system.

Claim 86 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83, wherein the matting agent is present in an amount of from 1% to 10% by weight based on the total weight of binder and cross-linking agent in the system.

Claim 87 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83, wherein the cross-linking agent does not contain any glycidyl esters that have a molecular weight of up to and including 1500.

Claim 88 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83, wherein the epoxy-group containing compound is a mixture of a diglycidyl compound and a triglycidyl compound.

Claim 89 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 88, wherein the carboxyl-containing polymer is a carboxyl-terminated polyester and/or a carboxyl-containing (meth)acrylate polymer.

Claim 90 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 88, wherein the diglycidyl compound and triglycidyl compound are present in a ratio by weight of from 10:1 to 1:10.

Claim 91 (new) A thermally curable system, comprising:

- (a) a binder comprising at least one carboxyl-containing polymer;
- (b) a cross-linking agent comprising at least one epoxy-group-containing compound; and
- (c) a matting agent according to claim 26.

Claim 92 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 91, wherein the polymerization product of the matting agent has an epoxy value of from 1.5 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram, and the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of the polymerization product to metal equivalents of the metal salt or metal complex is at least 3.5.

Claim 93 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 91 or claim 92, wherein the cross-linking agent comprises a glycidyl ester compound having a molecular weight of up to and including 1500.

Claim 94 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 91 or claim 92, wherein the cross-linking agent consists of glycidyl esters having a molecular weight of up to and including 1500, or contains a predominant amount of such glycidyl esters.

Claim 95 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 91 or claim 92, wherein the epoxy-group-containing compound is a mixture of a diglycidyl compound and a triglycidyl compound.

Claim 96 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 91 or claim 92, wherein the diglycidyl compound and triglycidyl compound are present in a ratio by weight of from 10:1 to 1:10.

Claim 97 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 91 or claim 92, wherein the mixture of a diglycidyl compound and a triglycidyl compound is a mixture of diglycidyl terephthalate and triglycidyl trimellitate.

Claim 98 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83 or 91, further comprising constituent (c), a natural or synthetic wax, or wax-like substance having a melting point of at least 50°C, present in an amount of from 5% to 30% by weight based on the total weight of the matting agent constituents (a), (b) and (c).

Claim 99 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83 or 91, further comprising constituent (c), a natural or synthetic wax, or wax-like substance having a melting point of at least 50°C, present in an amount of from 10% to 30% by weight based on the total weight of the matting agent constituents (a), (b) and (c).

Claim 100 (new) The thermally curable system of claim 83 or 91, characterized by the absence of any wax, or wax-like substance having a melting point of at least 50°C.

Claim 101 (new) A fully cured system according to either of claims 83 or 91.

Claim 102 (new) A process for coating an article, comprising the steps of applying a thermally curable system according to either of claims 83 or 91 to said article, and curing the system at a temperature of at least 100°C.

Claim 103 (new)      The process of claim 102, wherein the temperature is in the range from 150°C to 250°C.